

Social Service Human Relations Board
Minutes of the Regular Meeting, Thursday, April 26, 2007

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL: Acting President Wasko called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m. Also present were Franz, Soglin, Nielsen, Chen and Villareal. Staff: Jones, and Brown.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The minutes of the February 22, 2007, meeting were approved (M/S Villareal and Soglin) and unanimous. The minutes of the March 22, 2007, meeting were approved (M/S Soglin, Franz) and unanimous.

3-A. PRESENTATION FROM THE ALAMEDA HOUSING AUTHORITY: Ms. Kay Wetherwax from the Alameda Housing Authority (AHA) provided the Board with a presentation regarding Housing Authority programs. She explained two different types of programs being managed by the AHA: Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program and Housing Authority managed properties. She provided two handouts.

The presentation focused on the Section 8 program. The Housing Choice Voucher program waiting list was last opened in 2003 for one week. During that week they received 22,000 applications. 6,000 of the 22,000 applicants were selected through a lottery to be placed on the wait list. At this time there are still approximately 2,200 still on the waitlist. The waitlist prioritizes applicants who were Alamedans at the time of application, veterans, and people with disabilities. HUD requires AHA to periodically send postcards to the entire waitlist asking for folks to update their information. When they don't respond to the postcard within reasonable time, they are dropped from the waitlist.

The City of Alameda has 1,675 Housing Choice Vouchers units available, and the average is about 100 units being available for various reasons at any given time. The AHA meets once a week with staff to discuss vacancies. All of the Alameda extremely low-income from the waitlist have been placed or removed from the list (because they have found housing elsewhere or cannot be located). The AHA is now attempting to place extremely low-income people from the waitlist who did not receive the residence credit.

The Housing Choice Voucher program has three separate agreements for each unit. The first is an agreement with the landlord and tenants. The only screening AHA does is criminal background check and income verification. The landlord handles any other screening he would do for any tenant. The second agreement is a Family Obligation. Each family member living in the unit age 18 and over must sign and adhere to this agreement. The third is an income assistance payment contract.

Acting President Wasko – How does the Housing Choice Voucher program work if a family leaves Alameda?

Wetherwax - Families are allowed to be “portable” within the County while in the program. The AHA asks all families that they provide a Housing Choice Voucher to, to stay in Alameda at least a year.

AHA maintains affordable housing which is described as managed housing complexes without Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) tenants. These can be AHA or privately owned complexes. Ms. Wetherwax further explained how these units work with flat rents.

Member Soglin – How long can people stay in Alameda?

Wetherwax - Anyone who qualifies and is in the Housing Choice Voucher program can stay in Alameda and in the program until their income exceeds income limits. A person's income can

increase and they can stay within the program, as long as they are below income guidelines. As income grows, adjustments are made to how much residents receive in assistance.

Member Villareal – How do they prove they are a resident?

Wetherwax - Applicants have to prove they were a resident at the time they applied for the program. Residency is independently verified through third parties by AHA staff.

Member Wasko – Is there still assistance for security deposits?

Wetherwax - No. There once was a program available for tenants to get assistance for their security deposits and 97% paid back the program. There are no longer funds for this.

Ms. Wetherwax continued to explain a person can be on more than one waitlist. Payment standards are a formula from HUD. Alameda County has 4-5,000 Housing Choice Vouchers. There is no emergency housing or transitional housing within these programs, this is a HUD regulation.

Member Franz – Could the Board partner and submit a handout to be included in an AHA mailing? Also are there preferences for the waitlists?

Wetherwax - Yes. The AHA sends a newsletter throughout the year and a briefing packet to all new program recipients.

Member Neilsen – Are there any homeownership programs?

Wetherwax – No homeownership programs are available through these programs.

Member Chen – What does the AHA do to ensure there is no fraud happening?

Wetherwax - The AHA completes annual routine inspections for tenants and landlords. HUD audits the AHA on a regular basis.

Member Chen – What happens in a case of discrimination?

Wetherwax - The AHA receives training on this subject, but almost all complaints are forwarded to Sentinel Fair Housing. Sentinel Fair Housing and the AHA provide property owners and landlords training during routine workshops.

Ms. Wetherwax thanked the Board for their interest in learning more about the AHA programs, and that she is available for any follow-up questions they may have.

3-B. PRESENTATION FROM THE ALAMEDA POINT COLLABORATIVE: Mr. Doug Biggs from the Alameda Point Collaborative (APC) provided a PowerPoint presentation to the Board, and provided a packet of information. APC has a 59 year lease with the City. Biggs explained that their facilities house 220 low income and formerly homeless individuals. Mr. Biggs highlighted APC programs, including: the APC bike shop, Plow Shares nursery, Growing Youth food security program, and afterschool homework help.

Mr. Biggs explained harm reduction and empowerment philosophies of APC's programs. Residents engage in community leadership and some are staff members. Resident staff include a facilities manager with three other staff members, two grounds staff, two on-the-job training staff, and a crew of five unit-ready members.

Mr. Biggs explained that APC has been successful in creating and maintaining community ties with the College of Alameda – One-Stop Center, Alameda Communication Alliance, Alameda Hospital, Chabot and Merritt Colleges.

Member Wasko – Can you please give us feedback on how the EveryOne Home Plan might provide APC any future opportunity?

Biggs - There are parts of the EveryOne Home Plan that are exciting, like the “No Wrong Door” part of the Plan. Collaborating service providers in hopes of a seamless exchange is a good thing.

Mr. Biggs went on to explain one of the differences between APC and AHA is that APC is focused on providing services in addition to housing. Each resident is assigned a Service Specialist as their advocate. APC views any eviction as a failure so they try to avoid an eviction through services and programs.

Member Chen – Can you talk a little bit about any security or crime rate concerns at APC?

Biggs - APC is assigned two Alameda Police officers, one on days, and one on nights. They have incorporated Community Policing and it has been working well. This is a big open space out here, 34 acres. This has been a transitional process for all of us in the city, but issues are occurring less.

Member Neilsen – Are you able to talk about the development at Alameda Point?

Biggs - We are in a 59 year lease with the city. I cannot really say what will happen once the redevelopment starts happening around us, but we see the opportunity as having positive potential for residents and the community.

Acting President Wasko thanked Mr. Biggs for the very informative presentation.

3-C. PARTICIPATION IN THE MAYOR’S 4TH OF JULY PARADE: Member Franz requested the Board participate in the Mayor’s 4th of July Parade. The trolley has been reserved and he could schedule a Dixieland Band on the trolley. Motion to participate, include the trolley, and cap the expenditures at \$800. (M/S Franz, Soglin) and unanimous. Acting President Wasko will facilitate inviting families to participate on the trolley and the decorating and coordinating.

3-D. WORKGROUP STATUS REPORTS:

Alamedans Together Against Hate – Member Villareal reported this is Fair Housing month. This workgroup is in collaboration with the College of Alameda for possible upcoming events. The letter was sent to AMCCC with regrets in co-sponsoring their event.

Assessment and Awareness – Member Franz reported this workgroup just met and they are discussing the implementation of a Swipe Card system. They are going to schedule a demonstration for the end of May on the data system. This workgroup is also working on addressing the need for dental services. They are working on compiling a short list of services for an easy community handout, and in multiple languages.

Family Services Workgroup – Acting President Wasko reported this workgroup is working on two mini movies with Channel 31 (Alameda Power and Telecom). One will be from the In-the-Mix forum and one will be on teen stereotypes.

Sister City Workgroup – Member Chen reported they are waiting for a confirmation from Wuxi for a delegation to visit.

4. BOARD / STAFF COMMUNICATIONS, NON-AGENDA: Member Franz mentioned the Alameda Services Collaborative luncheon will next be on May 23, 2007. Staff Jones reported the EveryOne Home report has been referred to staff to answer additional questions. She further stated the FY07-08 Action Plan was approved with the funding recommendations. The Eden I & R, 2-1-1 program is

still in testing phase. The Joint Meeting with the Mayor and Council will likely be the Board's June date. Staff Brown reminded the Board the Volunteer's Breakfast is scheduled for May 31st at Grand Pavilion.

5. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: None

6. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Jones, Secretary
Social Service Human Relations Board

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